

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5525
INFO AMCONSUL ADANA
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMCONSUL ISTANBUL
AMCONSUL IZMIR
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 19342

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, UR, US, TU, GR, CY
SUBJECT: TURKEY, GREECE, CYPRUS: THE VIEW FROM MOSCOW

REF: (A) ANKARA 5761, (B) ISTANBUL 2443

SUMMARY: RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH GREEKS, TURKS,
AND SOVIETS IN MOSCOW REVEAL AN AWARENESS THAT
SUBTLE SHIFTS IN EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN-SOVIET
RELATIONSHIPS ARE TAKING PLACE, BUT ALSO INDICATE
A LACK OF AGREEMENT ON WHAT THOSE SHIFTS MIGHT BE.
ATTENTION IN THIS VACATION MONTH IS NOW FOCUSED ON
THE HISTORIC VISIT OF THE GREEK FOREIGN MINISTER IN
EARLY SEPTEMBER - A VISIT WHICH, BECAUSE IT IS AN
HISTORICAL FIRST AND BECAUSE IT COMES AT A TIME OF
REGIONAL CHANGE, MAY ASSUME A PUBLIC SIGNIFICANCE
LARGER THAN IT WOULD OTHERWISE MERIT. END SUMMARY.

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1. WITHIN THE PAST FEW DAYS EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE
HAD PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS WITH TURKISH EMBASSY
COUNSELOR BILHAN, GREEK EMBASSY DCM
BOTZARIS, AND MFA FIFTH EUROPEAN DEPT. COUNSELOR
PUSHKIN (GREECE-CYPRUS). ALL WERE PREOCCUPIED
WITH THE IMPENDING VISIT OF THE GREEK FOREIGN MINISTER
AS SEEN AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE LIFTING OF

THE U.S. ARMS EMBARGO AGAINST TURKEY AND ECEVIT'S VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION. ALL PROFESSED TO SEE RALLIS' VISIT AS A "NORMAL" STEP IN THE FOUR YEAR LONG PROCESS OF IMPROVED GREEK-SOVIET RELATIONS, BUT ALL ADMITTED THAT THE VISIT AND THE VISIT COMMUNIQUE WOULD BE PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT AT THIS TIME. THEY SAW THIS AS SO NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE PRECEDENT-SETTING NATURE OF ANY "FIRST" VISIT, BUT ALSO, AND MORE IMPORTANT, BECAUSE OF THE UNCERTAIN NATURE OF THE SUBTLY CHANGING PATTERN OF INTER-RELATIONSHIPS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN SET IN MOTION BY THE ECEVIT VISIT AND THE LIFTING OF THE U.S. ARMS EMBARGO.

2. THE GREEK DCM FELT THAT ECEVIT HAD SOLD HIS POLITICAL BIRTHRIGHT FOR A MESS OF SOVIET ECONOMIC POTAGE. BOTZARIS QUESTIONED THE SCALE AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SOVIET-TURKISH ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP, AND HE FELT THAT THE SOVIET-TURKISH POLITICAL DOCUMENT GAVE MOSCOW A HANDLE WITH WHICH TO PRESS THE TURKS ON THE ISSUE OF THE REOPENING OF CERTAIN U.S. INTELLIGENCE GATHERING BASES IN TURKEY. HE THOUGHT ECEVIT MIGHT, IN TURN, USE THIS SOVIET PRESSURE AS AN EXCUSE TO RESIST THE U.S. DESIRE THAT THE BASES BE ACTIVATED.

3. IT IS TRUE THAT MOSCOW IS GREATLY CONCERNED OVER
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THE POSSIBILITY OF THE REOPENING OF THE BASES. IN AN UNUSUAL MANNER, THE SOVIET CENTRAL PRESS (PRAVDA, AUG. 3; KRASNAYA ZVEZDA, AUG. 5) HAS SPOKEN OPENLY OF THIS LIKELIHOOD, AND TURKISH COUNSELOR BILHAN HAS TOLD US THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE SHOWN "ANXIETY" ABOUT THIS IN NUMEROUS WORKING LEVEL CONVERSATIONS HERE. ODDLY ENOUGH, HOWEVER, THE TASS ARTICLE WHICH HAS CAUSED SUCH A STIR IN TURKEY (REF A, B) HAS NOT, TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, BEEN RELEASED HERE AND CERTAINLY HAS NOT BEEN REPORTED IN THE SOVIET CENTRAL PRESS. SINCE EMBASSY DID NOT RECEIVE ANKARA'S 5643 WHICH REPORTED THIS ARTICLE, WE ARE NOT ABLE TO COMMENT ON THE ARTICLE ITSELF.

4. OUR TURKISH SOURCE TOLD US THAT, AS A RESULT OF THE IMPROVEMENT OF U.S.-TURKISH RELATIONS, A CERTAIN CHILL HAS SET IN WITH REGARD TO SOVIET-TURKISH RELATIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, REPEATED TURKISH REQUESTS TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS ON THE FLIGHT INFORMATION REGION HAVE GONE UNANSWERED. ON THE OTHER HAND, ACCORDING TO BILHAN, THE ECONOMIC UNDERSTANDINGS REACHED DURING ECEVIT'S VISIT ARE MOVING FORWARD ON

SCHEDULE AND PLANS ARE BEING MADE FOR A MEETING OF
THE JOINT ECONOMIC COMMISSION IN MOSCOW IN LATE
SEPTEMBER-EARLY OCTOBER.

5. WHILE THERE IS SOME DISAGREEMENT AMONG OUR INTER-
LOCUTORS ABOUT MOSCOW'S PRESENT EVALUATION OF THE
CYPRUS SITUATION, ALL AGREE THAT REPORTS IN THE WESTERN
PRESS ABOUT A CHANGE IN MOSCOW'S POLICY (AS REFLECTED
IN THE ECEVIT VISIT COMMUNIQUE) WERE GREATLY
EXAGGERATED. ALL EXPLAIN AWAY THE LANGUAGE OF THE
SOVIET-TURKISH COMMUNIQUE AS REPRESENTING THE LOWEST
COMMON DENOMINATOR OF AGREEMENT ON THIS COMPLICATED
ISSUE.

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6. IN ANY CASE, AS HAS BEEN PREVIOUSLY REPORTED,
THE GREEKS ASKED FOR AND RECEIVED PRIVATE SOVIET
REASSURANCE THAT SOVIET POLICY HAD NOT CHANGED, AND

THE SOVIET PRESS BEGAN TO APPLY A CORRECTIVE RUDDER TO WESTERN PRESS SPECULATION BY OPENLY CRITICIZING THE SITUATION IN THE TURKISH COMMUNITY OF CYPRUS AND BY PLUMPING FOR MOSCOW'S PERENNIAL IDEA OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CYPRUS (FOR EXAMPLE, V. DROBKOV'S ARTICLE IN JULY 7 WEEKLY NOVOYE VREMYA).

7. IN OUR CONVERSATION WITH HIM, MFA GREEK-CYPRIOT DESK OFFICER PUSHKIN REFUSED TO SPECULATE ABOUT MOSCOW'S PROSPECTS FOR GETTING RALLIS' ENDORSEMENT OF SUCH AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, BUT HE FREELY ADMITTED THAT THE CYPRUS QUESTION WOULD BE ONE OF THE PRIMARY TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION DURING THE VISIT. OF COURSE, OUR TURKISH COLLEAGUE BILHAN SAW THE WORST IN THIS REGARD, OMINOUSLY NOTING CYPRUS PRESI-
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DENT KYPRIANOU'S SUPPORT FOR THE CONFERENCE AND HIS CURRENT "PRIVATE" VISIT TO GREECE AS INDICATORS OF SOFTNESS IN THE GREEK POSITION. OUR GREEK COLLEAGUE, BOTZARIS, DID EMPHASIZE WHAT HE FELT TO BE THE NEW, AND IMPLICITLY ANTI-TURKISH, DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTED BY MOSCOW CALLING FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING UN RESOLUTIONS ON CYPRUS.

8. COMMENT: MOSCOW IS OBVIOUSLY CONCERNED AT THE IMPLICATIONS OF A SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENT IN U.S.-TURKISH RELATIONS AND MAY BE IRRITATED AT ANY INDICATION THAT ECEVIT USED HIS RECENT VISIT HERE PRIMARILY AS AN ATTEMPT TO PRESSURE THE AMERICANS. THE STAGE IS SET FOR AN IMPROVEMENT IN SOVIET-GREEK RELATIONS WHICH, NO MATTER HOW INNOCENT, CAN BE EXPECTED TO WORRY THE TURKS. AND THERE ARE CONTINUED RUMORS HERE OF A KYPRIANOU VISIT (PUSHKIN WOULD ONLY DENY THAT A JULY VISIT HAD BEEN SCHEDULED, NOTE THAT KYPRIANOU HAD VISITED THE U.S., AND AFFIRM THAT SUCH A VISIT TO MOSCOW - "LATER" - WOULD BE NORMAL AND DESIREABLE). A KYPRIANOU VISIT WOULD PRESENT MANY POSSIBILITIES FOR SOVIET MISCHIEF-MAKING, SHOULD MOSCOW DECIDE TO WAIVE ITS USUAL CAUTION WITH REGARD TO A BALANCE BETWEEN THE GREEK AND TURKISH POSITIONS TOWARD CYPRUS. WE DO NOT YET SEE ANY INDICATION THAT MOSCOW HAS DECIDED TO DO THIS, AND WE SUSPECT THAT WHAT WE WILL SEE IS A CONTINUATION OF MOSCOW'S PRESENT PATTERN OF SLIGHT ZIG ZAGS - FIRST TOWARD GREECE, THEN TOWARD TURKEY - WHICH IN THE END WILL PRODUCE THE SAME EVEN-HANDED POLICY LINE THAT WE HAVE SEEN IN THE PAST. TOON

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